

Department of Historic Resources

(www.dhr.virginia.gov)

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**27 PROPERTIES NAMED TO VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER AND
6 NEW HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS APPROVED**

RICHMOND – Six rock churches that arose in the once-isolated communities of southwest Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains and the former Chamberlin Hotel, a one-time resort and social hub next to Fort Monroe in Hampton, were among the 28 properties added to the Virginia Landmarks Register on Wednesday, December 6, by the Department of Historic Resources.

The six mountain churches, built between 1919 and 1950 in the bordering counties of Carroll, Floyd, and Patrick are the legacy of Presbyterian minister Robert W. Childress, a mountaineer who, after renouncing a rough-and-tumble life of drinking, gambling, and fighting, decided at the age of 30 to complete high school and college and become an ordained Presbyterian minister.

During 30 years of ministry, Childress, who died in 1956, brought education and spiritual and social leadership to remote Blue Ridge communities. He rallied church members to gather field stones for the churches they built, used buses to bring people to service and Sunday school, and broadcast gospel music from loud speakers mounted on the towers of some of the rock-faced churches. He also helped connect the people to the world beyond the mountains through his efforts to improve the area’s roads and bridges. In so doing, he secured local jobs through the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression.

The Chamberlin Hotel, built in 1928, served for many years as the only resort hotel in the Chesapeake Bay—Hampton Roads area. It provided guest services, as well as banquet rooms and office space for those visiting and working at Fort Monroe for three quarters of the twentieth century. During World War II, when a pair of ornate cupolas on the hotel’s towers was replaced by anti-aircraft batteries, it also housed military officers and their families.

Closed in 2003, the Chamberlin was the fourth hotel to be built on the site, which has long been associated with the history of Fort Monroe, established circa 1820. The hotel building, which integrates elements of Beaux Arts and Georgian architectural styles, is now being renovated to provide housing for senior citizens who have retired from military service.

Below is a complete listing of the properties or boundary increases that were added to the state register by the two advisory boards of the Department of Historic Resources during

their recent quarterly meeting. The properties are grouped by DHR's regional district offices:

In the Capital (Richmond) and central piedmont region:

- Bel Aire, Albemarle County
- The Boxley Place, Louisa County
- Broad Street Commercial Historic District, Boundary Increase, City of Richmond
- Elk Hill, Nelson County
- Eubank Hall, Lunenburg County
- Forest Hill, Amherst County
- Mechum River Farm, Albemarle County
- Tinsley Tavern, Goochland County

In the Northern Virginia and Shenandoah Valley region:

- Holmes Run Acres Historic District, Fairfax County
- Marshall Historic District, Fauquier County
- Paris Historic District, Fauquier County
- Purcellville Historic District, Loudoun County
- Western State Hospital, Boundary Increase, City of Staunton

In the Roanoke and southwest region:

- Edgewood, Henry County
- Margaret E. Poague House, Rockbridge County
- Richlands Historic District, Tazewell County
- Roanoke Downtown Historic District, Boundary Increase, City of Roanoke
- Reverend Robert Childress Presbyterian Rock Churches:
 - Bluemont Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Patrick County
 - Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Carroll County
 - Dinwiddie Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Carroll County
 - Mayberry Presbyterian Church, Patrick County
 - Slate Mountain Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Floyd County
 - Willis Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Floyd County

In the Tidewater region:

- Chamberlin Hotel, City of Hampton
- Ivy Hill Cemetery, Isle of Wight County
- Woodhouse House, City of Virginia Beach
- Zion Methodist Church, City of Norfolk

The Department of Historic Resources will now nominate these state-register properties for listing on the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service.

Photographs and detailed information about each of property is available on the DHR website at (http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/homepage_features/board_activities.htm).

Listing a property on the VLR places no restrictions on owners, although the recognition allows property owners to receive technical assistance from the DHR or pursue state and federal rehabilitation tax-credit incentives and programs. Listing on the state and national registers has spurred economic revitalization efforts in many historic districts throughout the state.

For a property or resource to be VLR-listed, it must meet important historic criteria. It can do so through association with significant historical events or persons, or through possession of outstanding archaeological or architectural features.

Highway Markers

In addition to the register properties above, the following six highway markers were approved by the Historic Resources Board for installation along Virginia roadways:

- “Middlesex County Courthouse,” Middlesex County, sponsored by Middlesex County Museum, in Saluda
- “Pound Virginia,” Town of Pound, Wise County, sponsored by Historical Society of the Pound
- “Andrew Zirkle Mill,” Forestville, Shenandoah County, sponsored by Robert B. Andrews and Sherryl A. Belinsky
- “Ella Fitzgerald,” Newport News, sponsored by the Department of Historic Resources
- “Matilda Sisserietta Jones,” Portsmouth, sponsored by the Department of Historic Resources
- “Adam Thorowgood,” Virginia Beach, sponsored by students at the Thoroughgood Elementary School, Virginia Beach

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